Lost Without Me

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by WordsAblaze

Summary

Will laughs. “You didn’t have to intimidate him quite so badly.”

“On the contrary, Will, I believe I let him off lightly,” Hannibal replies, and, in an uncharacteristic display of camaraderie, settles on the steps beside him, so close that their shoulders are almost brushing. “Besides,” he adds, “he was… bothersome.”

“You appear to be fighting my battles for me, Doctor Lecter,” Will murmurs, but he fools neither of them into thinking he truly minds.

Notes

me, posting a daily prompt challenge at midday rather than midnight? more likely than you think.

day 10 prompts used: stranded

See the end of the work for more notes

Will knew he shouldn't have agreed to attend the party, but he's never been able to refuse invitations for long when Jack pushes and pushes and pushes and pushes and—

"Will."

He blinks, adjusting his glasses as he looks up to meet Hannibal's gaze. Or rather, *almost* meet Hannibal's gaze, because the glasses are successfully doing their job of making it hard for anyone to properly see his eyes.

"Doctor Lecter."

Hannibal's smile is small, but strangely comforting nonetheless. "I wouldn't have expected to see you at such an event."

"That makes two of us," he sighs, "but Jack, uh, wanted to prove I'm worth the exception made on my behalf."

"As if that could ever be in doubt," Hannibal replies, and he sounds so genuinely confused that Will doesn't quite know how to respond, torn between accepting the unexpected compliment and defending Jack like he usually does in such situations.

Thankfully, that decision is taken away from him when, as if summoned by the mere utterance of his name, Jack appears beside him. "Will! Glad you made it. Doctor Lecter, would you mind if I borrowed Will? There are some people I'd like him to meet."

Hannibal looks as though he wants to reject the idea, so Will clears his throat. "I think you'll find I can represent myself, Jack." No sooner than the words leave his mouth does Will realise that the relationship between Jack's embarrassment and Hannibal's amusement is directly proportional.

"Right, right," Jack mutters, and turns on his heel, clearly expecting Will to just follow him. Sharing a knowing look with Hannibal—and ignoring the way the small gesture alleviates at least half of the tension in his shoulders—Will indulges Jack and follows behind him.

It turns out the people Jack wants him to meet are typical management: beyond dull and caring of little other than challenging the validity of his so-called party trick. One of them calls his methods as such to his face, and even Jack has the decency to look offended at that.

Needless to say, by the time they've successfully convinced whoever those esteemed guests were—it's not like Will cares enough to have learned their names—that their blind eye is not going to backfire on them, Will is exhausted and wants nothing more than to curl up in front of the fireplace with his pack. Unfortunately, Alana had chaperoned, no doubt prompted by Jack to ensure he *actually* turned up, and she seems to have melted somewhere into the crowd.

With a quiet groan, Will finds the nearest exit and settles on the porch.

"Hey, you're Will Graham!"

With a second, even quieter groan, Will scowls up at whoever the man in front of him is. “And?”

“And you do the thing!” the man replies, clearly not at all put off by his tone. Or, more likely, entirely oblivious to it, judging by the way he’s slurring his words ever so slightly. “Can you do it now?”

“I’m not here for your entertainment,” Will bites out, more than a little satisfied when the other man falters, a frown developing on his face.

He must be an FBI agent, because his bravery is astonishing, and he tries again, this time crouching in front of Will the way one would in front of a disobedient toddler. “Hey, I’m just curious. It’s real impressive and I figured it’d make the evening a little livelier if you, you know, provided a demonstration.”

Will almost agrees with him. *Almost* . But something about the agent’s expectant tone is too entitled and irksome to ignore, so he just shrugs. “Can’t help you until a body is discovered.”

The man hums thoughtfully, and stands back up. “Morbid.”

“That’s me,” Will agrees, swallowing a smile. “Sorry.”

“Morbidity does not require apology,” a voice says from behind the tipsy agent, “but your liver will when you drink it to the point of dysfunction.”

The agent bristles and turns, only to stumble back when he’s met with a wall of irrefutable disapproval radiating from Hannibal that Will knows from experience is near impossible to tolerate for more than a few seconds. “My liver is fine,” the agent mutters, clearly offended, and disappears somewhere into the house between one blink and the next.

Will laughs then. “You didn’t have to intimidate him quite so badly.”

“On the contrary, Will, I believe I let him off lightly,” Hannibal replies, and, in an uncharacteristic display of camaraderie, settles on the steps beside him, so close that their shoulders are almost brushing. “Besides,” he adds, “he was… bothersome.”

“You appear to be fighting my battles for me, Doctor Lecter,” Will murmurs, but he fools neither of them into thinking he truly minds.

Hannibal hums in acknowledgement. “Only because you appear reluctant to fight at all.” And, when Will turns to ask him what exactly he means by that, Hannibal reaches up and carefully tugs Will’s glasses away from his face. “The battlefield would bow before you, were you to select a sword instead of a shield.”

Will takes a deep breath, his fingers itching to snatch back his glasses, and shakes his head slowly. “And what kind of sword would you have me wielding?” He only realises how suggestive the question may sound when the silence stretches a moment too long, and looks up sharply, opening his mouth to apologise and promptly stopped by Hannibal clicking his tongue.

“Regret is unbecoming on you,” Hannibal says firmly, another small smile blooming on his face, “and is not a particularly good material to use when forging weapons.”

He wants to argue that he isn't trying and has no need to forge weapons, but something—the part of his brain that sounds suspiciously like the man beside him—tells him that he can do better than such a meek excuse. So, instead, he nods. “I suppose you’re right. Though, surely, no blacksmith would advise working past the point of exhaustion.”

“And have you?” Hannibal inquires sincerely.

Will nods again, this time allowing his shoulders to curve forwards as he pinches the bridge of his nose. “And then some,” he admits quietly.

“You did not drive yourself here,” Hannibal states, and Will really shouldn’t be surprised at how quickly he’d worked out that, yes, for all his indulgence in talks of weapons and battlefields, Will has rather foolishly ended up stranded in enemy territory.

“I don’t even know where *here* is,” he confirms, “Alana picked me up, most likely at Jack’s request.”

For a second, Hannibal looks, for lack of a better term, positively *murderous* . But the clock ticks and his fury vanishes as quickly as it had arrived, and he’s on his feet before Will can dwell on it. “I will drive you home.”

It’s not an offer, and Will is grateful for that because he knows he would have instinctively declined. Most likely, he thinks, Hannibal had known that too. “Sometimes allies can be more powerful than weapons,” Will replies as he too pulls himself upright.

“Indeed,” Hannibal agrees quietly, a surprised sort of pride glinting in his eyes.

End Notes

i might fashion this into a 5+1 at some point because introvert Will >>

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